

Delaware receives highest federal rating for special education services

Delaware [earned the highest rating possible](#) from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) in its evaluation of the state's special education services. The top marks come just three years after Delaware had received a "needs intervention" rating, the second-lowest.

"I am proud of the progress our state has made. Led by our school districts and charter schools, their collective efforts are reflected in this rating," Secretary of Education Susan Bunting said. "Although more work remains, this is confirmation that we are continuing to move in the right direction."

For the past two years Delaware received the second-highest rating, "needs assistance," falling just shy last year of earning the top "meets requirements" rating earned this year. In each of the past three years, Delaware's scores reflected progress: Delaware moved from an overall grade of 53 percent in 2014 to 68 percent in 2015 and to 76 percent in 2016. This year, Delaware scored 83 percent.

This year's evaluation, based on school data from the 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 school years, takes into account the following improvements Delaware made to special education since earning the "needs intervention" rating in 2013. That rating had been based on performance data from the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years.

For the past three years, Delaware has:

- Provided professional learning for special education teachers on standards-based Individual Education Plans

(IEPs), positive behavior supports and accessing the general curriculum.

- Included special education teachers in all trainings related to the state's academic standards.
- Assisted districts and charters schools in developing transition plans for students with disabilities who are 14 years old or entering the eighth grade to help them succeed in jobs or further education. The state has been collecting data to ensure those plans are being prepared and carried out.
- Clarified for districts and charters the policies requiring students with disabilities to take the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and state assessments to ensure the state has full information on the progress of these students.
- Provided districts and charter schools with comprehensive data on their performance to help local leaders better understand how well they are complying with state and federal law and how their students with disabilities are performing academically.
- Provided targeted state technical assistance to those districts and charter schools found to be in need of assistance and intervention.

In addition, the Delaware Department of Education has completed year three of Delaware's IDEA State Systemic Improvement Plan focusing on improving literacy in grades K-3 for all students including students with disabilities and English learners. To implement this plan, the Delaware Early Literacy Initiative was established to support districts and charters in providing a robust multi-tiered system of academic supports for literacy. Cohort I began in Fall 2017 and included Thomas Edison Charter School and Cape Henlopen's Milton and H0 Brittingham elementary schools. During the 2017 – 2018 school year, the Department of Education will continue working with Cohort I schools as well as partnering with new schools for Cohort II.

Woodbridge School District is among those [districts and charters](#) that made strong progress this year.

Woodbridge Superintendent Heath Chasanov points to regular data review meetings in which a team of staff members look at a variety of indicators reflective of children's academic, social and behavioral needs. Team members talk about what is going well and what changes need to be made – tomorrow.

“It's real-time conversations,” he said.

Media Contact: Alison May, alison.may@doe.k12.de.us, (302) 735-4099